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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

NFAC 3189-81
27 May 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment
National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM: [REDACTED]
Assistant National Intelligence Officer for NESA

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SUBJECT: Monthly Warning Meeting - May 1981

1. The meeting was devoted to a discussion of Lebanon and the recently completed SNIE, which looks beyond the current crisis over Syrian missiles in the Bekaa Valley. The representatives felt that selected key judgments from the SNIE should be highlighted through this warning mechanism. [REDACTED]

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2. Even if the current crisis is defused, "the bitter rivalry and divergent ambitions of Christian and Muslim militants, coupled with Israeli and Syrian involvement, practically guarantee continued high tensions in Lebanon. Even without the involvement of outside powers, Lebanon's central government does not have the strength to engineer a compromise that would accommodate the seemingly irreconcilable interests of the predominant Christian group - the Maronite Phalange - and of militant Lebanese Muslims and Palestinians. Israel and Syria are using their respective clients and presence in Lebanon to serve their own security interests in the struggle against one another. Neither sees its interests served by a strengthened, unified, and independent Lebanon. It is doubtful that an enduring settlement of Lebanon's problems can be reached outside the context of a broader Arab-Israeli settlement." [REDACTED]

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3. "The greatest near-term dangers for the United States in the explosive situation are the strong possibilities for partition of Lebanon and for a direct, broad conflict between Israel and Syria. Partition of the country, particularly the declaration of a Maronite state allied with Israel, would significantly alter the contours of Middle East politics and dangerously

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complicate efforts by the United States to maintain the 1974 Syrian-Israeli disengagement agreement; enhance its standing among moderate Arab states; facilitate Egypt's reentry into the Arab mainstream; and develop a strategy to advance peace negotiations. A major Israeli-Syrian confrontation could irreparably harm US credentials for managing the peace process if, as seems inevitable, the Arab world blamed the United States for Israeli 'aggression.' In addition, US efforts to build a regional security framework would suffer a serious setback. A humiliating Syrian defeat by Israel would put President Sadat in an extraordinarily difficult situation and could undermine the Egyptian-Israeli treaty and damage US-Egyptian ties." [REDACTED]

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4. Although at the time of the warning meeting Ambassador Habib appeared to be making progress in negotiations with the Syrians and Israelis, community representatives felt that the situation remained very volatile. News that the Ambassador is returning to Washington this week heightens the prospects for a direct Syrian-Israeli clash. Even though the Ambassador's mission is presumably continuing, his absence from the region lessens the restraints on both sides. An Alert Memorandum issued April 30 lays out the consequences for Lebanon of Syrian-Israeli hostilities and the implications for the US. [REDACTED]

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NIC/A/NIO/NESA: [REDACTED] 27 May 81 [REDACTED]

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Distribution:

Orig - DCI

1 - DDCI

1 - ER

1 - D/NFAC

1 - DD/NFAC

1 - C/NIC

1 - SA/CI [REDACTED]

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2 - NIO/NESA

1 - Each NIO

1 - Each Office Director

1 - Senior Review Panel

1 - NSC Coordinator

1 - OPA/NESA

1 - OPA/USSR

1 - OER/D/NE

1 - OER/D/SA

1 - NFAC Reg

1 - DDO/NE

1 - DDO/EPDS

1 - DDO/C/CA/IAD

1 - NCPO/Near East

1 - NFAC/RES

1 - OSWR/LSD

1 - NPIC/IEG/TWFD [REDACTED]

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1 - NPIC/IEG/TWFD [REDACTED]

1 - OD&E/FO ID-11 [REDACTED]

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